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Cularin at Night

Scenario Supplement for Night's Friend

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Cularin at night isn't what it used to be. Rumors abound about Thaereian thugs scouring the streets in the dead of night to round up malcontents and innocents alike -- folks who are rarely seen again. This latest supplement to the Living Force campaign ties into the October scenario, Night's Friend, the second part of the "Night Eyes" trilogy.

These streets were fair

And full of life;

These streets were kind

And made for dreams.

These streets are dark

And promise strife;

Cularin's moved

Beyond our means.

-- Graffiti found on the outer wall of a warehouse in Gadrin

Old Ezil? Nope. Haven't seen him. The old man didn't ever do anything but sit over in the corner and talk bad about anyone and anything that came to the planet. He was worse than a Tarasin, most of the time. Thinking he knew everything that was going on, giving advice nobody wanted. People what had brains in their heads, they didn't even listen. But there's always a few, right?

Nah, you don't want to talk to me. I saw the old man, and I listened to him, but I never believed half of what he said. Besides, he mainly ever thought about what happened during the day. Oh, he thought he knew about pirates and smugglers and all sorts of bad things, but like most of the old-timers, when the suns went down, he hobbled off and fell into his bed, and then he missed most of the things he wanted to be talking about. No, I don't care that he said he knew what was going on at night. He slept through half the things what happened around Cularin, and the most important ones -- the

ones that would scare you stupid, leave you drooling like a Kowakian monkey-lizard on spice - he never knew about at all. 'Cause they happened at night. That's the way of things.

Now, what's that all about? Flashing a credstick at me like you think it'll make a difference. Why should I talk to you about anything I don't know? Here, lemme see that credstick. Hmm... look, you aren't asking easy questions, and there aren't easy answers. I might know one or two things I could talk to you about, but you gotta know that there's stuff that nobody knows. I mean, old Ezil, he talked and talked like he knew what was what. He didn't, no more than I do. Not for sure, at least. But there's a few things I figured out, things I seen at night what would make you quiver.

See, now, you're lookin' at me like you think I'm gonna talk about those crazy Tarasin witches that the holo-bim talked about a few weeks back. Not even gonna happen. The scariest thing on Cularin's not Tarasin. Most of them are harmless. Just foolish types, not actually doing anything to hurt people. More scare than substance.

Nah, the main threat on the streets, the one what scares all us, is those folks from Thaere. Was easier when they stayed hid, didn't come out in the open, but these patrols... they say they got jurisdiction, right? But they aren't law around here. I got friends in OPS, and Thaere's people are ignoring OPS. Might as well be that OPS don't exist. That's how much Thaere listens to them. And now they got the right to do whatever they want? Since when? I watched that debate thing that the holo-bim ran, just like you did. Just like most people did, what cared about what's going on in Cularin. Sounded to me like Thaere had to follow local rules.

They aren't. Like I got to tell you that. What Thaere's been doing at night, though... I mean, parading around in their little uniforms with their big guns during the day is one thing. But at night, they keep the guns and ditch the uniforms.

Don't believe me? Then how about this: Tell me where Vad Kirn, Horis Byrla, Anistia Qu, and Rof Barrges have gone. Or old Ezil. Or any of a couple hundred others. This ain't like the time when Nim'Ri and Gerta and them took off for the hills. This is people being taken. And yeah, I guess we kind of thought it might be people being taken then, too, but we were wrong. Maybe we're wrong again.

Speaking of Nim'Ri, word is now that he's not here because he "headed home." You find that funny? I sure do. Since my big lizardboy was born in Cularin. He didn't head back to wherever it is them Trandoshans come from. He got took. You look like maybe you know something about that - - what's the word? Me, I figure that after everything he did for the system, he wouldn't leave just because things was getting rough. If anything, he'd hang around and make sure that they started getting better. But he wouldn't be leaving. So my guess is, he's dead, and if I had to lay blame, I'd put it on Thaere. Summary of the "Night Eyes" Trilogy The "protection" offered by the Thaereians often includes harsh justice - - harsh enough that many citizens of Cularin have become increasingly resentful of the Thaereian presence. Senator Wren, however, maintains that Thaere has her support. Could she possibly know their cruelty?

Anyway, back to Thaere and them being here and doing things at night. Some of what they do is arrests. I seen it myself. I almost got caught in one of their sweeps, about a week back. The thing is, they don't much care who they get. At least, not that night. Probably not any of the others, far as it goes. They just wanted to get somebody. Maybe they have targets other times, but that night they just walked down the street in these black uniforms - - you couldn't hardly see them at all - - and whenever they come to somebody who was in the street at night, they just went all stun-baton happy on the person's neck. Front of the neck, too. They laughed. Sounded to me like they was having a "twitch" contest. Shock someone, see how long they twitched after you took the shock off. They had this droid cart behind them, just coming along and scooping up the folks they knocked out. Every time the droid picked someone up, it'd say, "You are under arrest. You are being detained." Then it'd drop them into its back-end, usually head first.

Yeah, I know. Hard to believe, right? You ask the Thaereians about these nighttime sweeps, you know what they'd say? That they're taking care of the criminal element. Making everybody safe. Nobody's going to dispute them, I guess, since they think nobody's seen them do what they do, and anyone what says something is likely to be "detained" next time they do a sweep. For all I know, that could be tonight. Which is why it ain't good to talk about, and why I ain't saying nothing to no one who might repeat it. You ain't recording any of this, right? But that... that ain't even the worst of it.

See, the bone that Thaere's throwing to OPS, to keep them shut up, is that crime really is down. Guess if you "detain" enough people at night, then you're gonna get a lot of the rough-and-tumble types, the ones what might've been looking to cause trouble. They want folks to think that's their whole goal, but if that was their goal, how come there's other folks disappearing, too? I know folks who ain't around any more. Some of them, maybe they deserved to get detained. Some of them didn't do nothing, though. But because crime's down, even if OPS is kinda getting run over by Thaere, OPS isn't gonna do nothing about it.

Besides, our "beloved" Senator says that Thaere's okay by her, and we should all be happy that they're willing to protect us. What I wanna know is, when's the next election? Let's get that cow out of office and put someone in who actually wants something good for Cularin. Just forget all those rumors about how she's some descendant of Reidi Artom - - no descendant of Reidi Artom would ever let this kind of thing happen in Cularin. You don't take a place that your great-grandmother found and named and brought the galaxy to, and then flush it. Wren's a politician. No better or worse than any of the rest of them.

Which is to say, she's pretty bad, if you ask me.

You keep looking at me crooked. Let me tell you... I don't like that. You look at me straight, or you just peddle your rump back out the door. You paid me to talk, you didn't pay me to put up with you thinking I don't know what I'm talking about. You don't like what I got to say? Fine. Leave. You already got your cred's worth.

Yeah. What I thought. So, we'll skip the political stuff. There's been a few times what people who had friends or family get detained went to OPS and asked what was up, and then they went to some Thaereian patrol and asked what

was up. You do this, from what I hear, first thing what happens is you fill out form after form after form. OPS, used to be, would start looking for the missing person while you did a few forms, but not a whole load. Thaere, they don't look until every form is filed. Perfectly. They don't want to go out and do this stuff, you gotta understand. They don't care. Watch their faces when you want them to actually do something. They roll their eyes, they look away, they check the clock - - anything to keep them from dealing with you. Not good, you ask me. Not good.

But you fill out all those forms - - and this is true for every one of the people I've talked to who went and talked to the Thaereians about finding someone who'd gone missing - - and within 24 hours, you get a call. Case is unsolvable. Sorry, we can't help you. No clues on Cularin as to the whereabouts of your missing individual, and our branch is autonomous from all the other branches in the system. No, we won't coordinate a search. We're here to protect you, not to make search parties. People leave planets all the time. You want another base to do some searching, you go to that base and you fill out their forms. No, we can't transfer your forms to them, because their forms are different. And so on, and so on.

In other words, they look just long enough to know that the person's not on the planet and then they stop looking. And you know how they know so fast that the person's not on Cularin? It ain't a sensor sweep. My friend Jex, he sat outside the Thaereian warehouse in Hedrett, near the groundport, and monitored their transmissions. Didn't listen in, just checked to see what kind of data was being sent. Nothing showed anything like a search. Just standard transmissions for the whole day. No particular effort made to find anyone, near as he could tell. But 24 hours after he finished the forms they commed him and said, "Your brother isn't here." How'd they know that if they didn't do anything? Huh?

Look, I gotta go. I talk too much, and I don't need more trouble'n I've already got. So you just leave, and I'll leave, and we can both walk careful. Cause there's bad things going on, and the worst of it's at night.

[The preceding was a transcription of a recorded voice-only conversation posted to the Cularin holonet by anonymous sources earlier this week. Thaere has not acknowledged any of the charges made, except to verify that yes, crime is down on Cularin.]